

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended) A method of producing TaC-transition metal based complex powder comprising the steps of:

a) dispersing a mixture of a Ta-containing material and a transition metal-containing water soluble salt into a solvent, stirring the mixture and spray-drying the stirred material to obtain a precursor powder;

b) calcining the precursor powder to form ultra fine Ta-transition metal complex oxide powder;

c) mixing the ultra fine Ta-transition metal complex oxide powder with [[nano]]nana-sized carbon particles, followed by drying to obtain a complex oxide powder; and

d) subjecting the dried complex oxide powder to [[reduction/carburization]] reduction at a temperature between 600 to 1,100°C, and then reduction and carburization at a temperature between 1,000 and 1,350°C in a non-oxidizing atmosphere.

2. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein said mixture of a Ta-containing material is Ta-based chloride salt, or Ta oxalate, and said solvent is water or organic solvent.

3. (Original) The method according to claim 2, wherein the content of the transition metal in the complex powder is in the range of 1 to 30 wt%.

4. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 3, wherein the ~~[[calcinations]]~~ calcining is performed at a temperature between 250 to 1000°C.

5. (Cancelled).

6. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the content of the transition metal in the complex powder is in the range of 1 to 30 wt%.

7. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein the ~~[[calcinations]]~~ calcining is performed at a temperature between 250 to 1000°C.

8. (Cancelled).

9. (New) The method according to claim 1, wherein the transition metal of the transition-metal containing salt comprises Co, Fe or Ni.

10. (New) The method according to claim 2, wherein the Ta-containing material is a Ta-based chloride salt.

11. (New) The method according to claim 10, wherein the Ta-based chloride salt is TaCl₅.

12. (New) The method according to claim 1, wherein the transition metal-containing water soluble salt is cobalt nitrate.

13. (New) The method according to claim 1, wherein the TaC-transition metal based complex powder has a particle size of from 50 to 300 nm.

14. (New) The method according to claim 1, wherein the TaC-transition metal based complex powder has a TaC phase having a TaC crystal size of from 46 to 52 nm.

15. (New) A TaC-transition metal based complex powder produced by the method of claim 1.

16. (New) The TaC-transition metal based complex powder according to claim 15, which has a particle size of from 50 to 300 nm.

17. (New) A TaC-transition metal based complex powder having a particle size of from 50 to 300 nm.